

Take Five, from Chile

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor
September 2017

Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$12 or less

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Over the past two decades, Chilean wines have experienced a surge in worldwide popularity, partly as a result of a more globalized wine trade, but also because higher-quality wines are being produced in the region. With an increase in exports, wine lovers around the world can indulge in some of the most delightful and economical wines made in the New World.

Today Chile is the world's seventh-largest producer and fourth-largest exporter of wine, and while it may seem like Chile is a new wine powerhouse, this country actually has a deep history in winemaking. The humble beginnings of Chilean viticulture date back to the time of the conquistadors.

In the mid-1500s, missionaries from Spain transported grape vines to the New World to make wine for Catholic mass, and by the end of the 16th century, Chile was a wine-producing country. The industry continued to excel through the end of the 1800s, when the rest of the wine world was battling the relentless root louse, grape phylloxera. Due to Chile's geographical position,

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protected by the ocean and the Andes Mountains, it was safe from phylloxera, and the country experienced a Golden Age of wine long before the modern winemaking machine we see today.

With warm, dry summers, ocean breezes, and a long range of hillside slopes, much of Chile has an ideal growing climate for premium grape vines. The five main grape varietals coming from this region today are: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and the popular red grape from Chile, Carménère. The good news is that here at Vino, we've curated a list with each of these Chilean varietals to try.

Though originally a native of the Bordeaux region in France, Carménère is now more widely planted in Chile, making it *the* Chilean wine to try.

Our first bottle is the **2015 Château Los Boldos Tradition Reserva Carménère**, from the Cachapoal area of the Rapel Valley. This Carménère is soft on the nose, with the signature spicy dark cherry notes on the palate. There's a hint of vanilla from the French oak aging, combined with decent acidity and tannins. Compare this to the **2015 Paisajes de Los Andes Carménère**, with more chocolate and licorice on the nose, red cherry and less spice on the tongue. Paisajes is a milder Carménère, with ripe cherry and chocolate dominating the flavor palate.

Two Sauvignon Blancs from the Central Valley provide options for the white wine lovers. The **2016 Kaiwan Reserva Privada** has intense tropical fruit on the nose, with robust pineapple and grapefruit flavor. The acidity of this wine is on the stronger side, and the finish is short, making it a nice sipping wine, but nothing more. The **2016 Viña Caballero Sauvignon Blanc** is softer on the nose, with more floral and toasted coconut flavors making their way to the mouth. On the palate, this wine also lacks a finish to remember. Both Sauvignon Blancs are pleasant, but neither presents a sturdy structure.

The **2015 Vistamar Sepia Reserva Chardonnay** offers a little more expression. This wine from the Casablanca Valley area, known for quality white wines, shows slight spice and nut on the nose due to French oak aging. Pear, candied apple, and papayas round out some of the fruit flavors discoverable in Vistamar's Chardonnay. A hazelnut cream finish will linger delicately on the back of your tongue as you finish your sip, preferably paired alongside creamy white sauce on fish or white meat.

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With strong smoky red berry notes laced with cocoa, the **2015 Frontera Merlot**, a reliable Concha y Toro brand out of Chile, is a delightfully smooth Merlot. There's not a lot of weight to this wine, so I'd skip serving it at dinner and reserve it for an aperitif or dark chocolate dessert.

Lastly, my favorite label of the wines: the creative **2016 Lucky Goat Cabernet Sauvignon**. This wine has just as funky a flavor as the design on the bottle. Red raspberries and plum dominate on the nose, with hints of earthier mushroom, too. The berries carry over to the palate and are met with medium tannins, but a weaker Cabernet structure. Bring your Chilean Lucky Goat to a fall barbecue, but not to your boss's dinner party.

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